Theresa Williams September 2, 2010

“…medicalization of disability casts human variation as deviance from the norm, as pathological condition, as deficit, and, significantly, as an individual burden and personal tragedy.”(Linton 224) The medical definition of disability portrays that it is not “normal” and that it is too different from society’s culture, especially that it is only a personal problem and not one that needs to be recognized and embraced by everyone.

“Because it is physically impossible to *overcome* a disability, it seems that what is *overcome* is the social stigma of having a disability.” (Linton 228) When you have a disability you can’t just make it go away; the bigger problem that must be overcome is society’s belief that they can’t take care of themselves.

“The loss of community, the anxiety, and the self doubt that inevitably accompany this ambiguous social position and the ambivalent personal state are the enormous cost of declaring disability unacceptable.” (Linton 230) Telling people that being disabled is wrong causes great emotional and personal torment.

“Setting up these dichotomies avoids concrete discussion of the ways the two groups of children actually differ, devalues the children with disabilities, and forces an “us and them” division of the population.”(Linton 231) The labels “normal and abnormal” alienates those with disabilities and allows the general population to avoid empathizing with the disabled community.

“Using this language attributes life, power, and intention to the condition and disempowers the person with the disability, rendering him or her helpless and passive.”(Linton 232) Using words with negative connotations, such as suffering, implies that the person is not in control of their own destiny but that the disability itself defines that persons’ life outcome.

“Disabled people, who have often spent a great deal of time as patients, discuss the ways that we have been socialized in the medical culture to be compliant, and that has often undermined our ability to challenge authority or to function autonomously.” (Linton 234) People with disabilities have consistently assumed a submissive role in society as a result of their relationships with physicians and the expectations of being a good patient.

“To say that I am physically challenged is to state that the obstacles to my participation are physical, not social, and that the barrier is my own disability.” (Linton 226) Using certain language about disabilities assumes that the only problem is their physical limitations, when in reality the social stigma is what holds them back more.

“Disabled people, if they are able to conceal their impairment or confine their activities to those that do not reveal their disability, have been known to pass.”(Linton 229) In order for a disabled person to integrate fully into society they are forced to disguise the truth about their disability.

“Historically, disabled people have had few opportunities to be active in society, and various social and political forces often undermine the capacity for self-determination.” (Linton 232). The limited number of disabled persons in positions of power has led people to assume that they cannot attain this status.

“…it is important to examine the nondisabled position and its privilege and power. It is not the neutral, universal position from which disabled people deviate, rather, it is a category of people whose power and cultural capital keep them at the center.” (Linton 236) The nondisabled community assumes the dominant role in society because they are the majority, however they are just one of many categories of people.

Linton, Simi. “Reassigning Meaning.” *Disabilities Studies Reader*. 3. (2010)